



## *Memorandum*

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Sara L. Hensley  
Jose Obregon

**SUBJECT: PARK RESTROOM CLOSURES  
- OTHER OPTIONS**

**DATE:** 06-03-04

---

Approved

/s/

Date

---

### **PURPOSE**

During the 2004-2005 Proposed Operating Budget Study Sessions, staff was directed to present options that would continue to open park restrooms for public use this summer season. These options could be in lieu of staff's budget proposal to downsize parks maintenance staff by eliminating 25.25 positions.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS) and General Services (GSD) staff collaborated on the following alternatives. The relative merits of each option are summarized as part of the description.

The combined value of the proposed park maintenance reductions total \$1,728,000 from both Departments. Of that total amount, the costs related to restroom maintenance, servicing, stocking, opening and closing plus utilities are \$898,000. This would provide funding for two Maintenance Assistant positions, a Groundworker position, and a Gardener position in PRNS as well as three Groundworker positions, 6.25 part-time Maintenance Assistant positions and six Maintenance Assistant positions and associated non-personal/equipment in GSD. Maintenance would be provided for 48 restrooms in 45 neighborhood park sites (at a cost of \$637,000) and 26 restrooms in 10 regional park sites (at a cost of \$261,000) for a total of 74 restrooms citywide. We anticipate three additional restrooms being added to the inventory during 2004-2005 - one at Prusch Farm Park and one at Selma Olinder Park. The third additional restroom will be added once the Tully Road ballfields facility is completely opened for public use.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Option #1 – Restore Funding for Seven Day Park Restroom Maintenance**

Restore funding in the amount of \$898,000 to provide for the personal and non-personal expenses to continue the existing level of service of opening and maintaining 74 restrooms throughout the park system. This alternative allows the service to continue without any interruption in 2004-2005. It would provide the funding necessary for daily visits to each park site with a restroom. It would also provide funding for the supplies and utility costs associated with the restrooms.

For FY 2003-2004 GSD proposed the discontinuation of contract services to clean and close restrooms by bringing these activities in-house and utilizing City staff. Council approved the reduction of \$376,219 in contractual services as part of last year's budget process, and GSD has implemented it by having the existing staff perform the tasks related to restroom cleaning. In addition GSD created a crew that works primarily from 2:00 – 10:30 p.m. to close neighborhood parks and restrooms and respond to park related emergencies and needs that occur late in the day.

The cleaning and lock-down services for neighborhood park restrooms and the costs associated with those services do not represent the entire body of work or costs related to local park restroom operations. City staff has always retained the responsibility to open each restroom and perform daily health and safety inspections. Additionally, the City is responsible for the cost of restroom supplies and the cost of all utilities associated with each restroom. Thus, the total cost for the daily opening and inspecting of neighborhood park restroom facilities, the daily servicing and closing of the restroom facilities and the cost of supplies and utilities has been estimated at \$637,000. Regional park restroom maintenance costs are estimated at \$261,000. In combination the total restroom maintenance and operation costs are \$898,000.

### **Option #2 – Contracted Services for Local Parks**

Staff analyzed the cost of re-contracting local park restroom maintenance. Utilizing the previous contracted cost for the cleaning and closing of local neighborhood park restrooms, and estimating the cost to contract the opening, inspection and stocking of the expanded facility inventory, staff projected a total cost of \$679,000. This total also includes the cost of supplies if provided by the City and the cost of all utilities. This estimated "contracted" total cost of \$679,000 exceeds the in-house cost of \$637,000 noted in Option #1.

Keeping restroom maintenance operations in-house affords greater flexibility with regard to the use of city staff. Unfortunately there are no other restroom-related contracts that can be considered for elimination to further increase staff efficiencies at reduced costs. As previously stated existing staff has already absorbed the functions of restroom cleaning and lock-down, as well as absorbing the maintenance of the new park facilities added to the inventory in 2003-

2004. This additional workload occurred at the same time that 11 positions were eliminated in 2003-2004.

City staff has always provided restroom maintenance services in the regional parks. Contracting out restroom services for the regional parks is not feasible given the high frequency of both maintenance and stocking that is needed because of the high usership. Regional park restrooms are serviced, stocked and maintained several times in a day because of the hundreds of park visitors utilizing these facilities. Staff assigned to the regional parks also performs opening and closing.

### **Option #3 – Use of Volunteers**

Staff considered the use of Adopt-A-Park volunteers and other City staff to assist in opening and closing park restrooms. The challenge is that many volunteers have no interest in adopting restrooms, and there is a safety concern in asking volunteers to close restrooms late at night where there might be other people unwilling to vacate the building. This can be somewhat mitigated by modifying the restroom operating hours to 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. or sunset, whichever is earlier, as an example.

To the extent that volunteers and other City staff (community center staff, Police, Library staff, Fire) are on site, in a particular park, on a consistent and reliable basis and have the interest to take on this responsibility, it would be helpful to the limited park maintenance staff by eliminating that particular restroom from the servicing route. However, staff believes this would represent a small group at best and would not entirely address the issue. Staff will work with Adopt-A-Park staff to market the idea of restroom adoption to our volunteers.

### **Option #4 – Use of Technology to Close Park Restrooms**

Staff also considered remote management of restroom closure as a pilot project given that the technology to achieve this is in the marketplace. Staff will research the costs in retrofitting the restrooms at Edenvale Garden Park so that closure can be achieved automatically. Opening the restrooms and its maintenance will continue to be done by staff but if closing could be handled remotely, it would save staff from having to go out to the park twice a day. Prior to implementation, the pilot program's details will be reviewed with Council District 2 office. This option does not address the issue of after hours site security. Currently, staff is able to either clear a site or identify to the Police Department that there are individuals who refuse to leave a park site after the designated closing time. This issue could be further evaluated as part of a pilot program. It should be noted that clean up and servicing of the restrooms are the highest cost elements.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends restoring funds to provide for the costs in maintaining, servicing, opening and closing 74 park restrooms throughout the City. Given that additional park acreage will be coming on line next fiscal year, and there will be no additional resources available for maintenance, staff also recommends modifying the restroom operating hours to be from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. or sunset, whichever is earlier, in an effort to create some capacity to take on the workload represented by these new parks. The current restroom hours are from approximately 7:00 a.m. to sunset.

The additional park acreage scheduled to come on line during 2004-2005 is listed below:

Cherryview Park	CD 9	0.50Acres
Floyd & Locust	CD 3	0.50Acres
Cahill	CD 3	3.00Acres
Hacienda Creek Park	CD 3	0.30Acres
Delmas / VTA Dog Park	CD 3	1.00Acres
Hillstone Park	CD 8	2.00Acres
Lone Bluff Park	CD 7	0.50Acres
O'Connor Park Expansion	CD 6	0.70Acres
Bestor / 6th Street Park	CD 3	0.80Acres
O'Donnell Park	CD 3	0.50Acres
Selma Olinder Park	CD 3	11.50Acres
<b>Total Acres</b>		<b>21.30</b>
<b>Sites</b>		<b>11.00</b>
Plata Arroyo Skate Park	CD 5	9,000sq. ft
Watson Skate Park	CD 3	9,000sq. ft
<b>Total sq. ft.</b>		<b>18,000</b>
<b>Sites</b>		<b>2.00</b>

/s/  
SARA L. HENSLEY  
Director of Parks, Recreation  
and Neighborhood Services

/s/  
JOSE OBREGON  
Director of General Services

ATTACHMENT A

Remaining park maintenance reductions proposed for 2004-2005

PARKS, RECREATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES - REGIONAL PARKS  
DIVISION

1.0 vacant Gardener (Almaden Lake Park PCN #7066)	\$65,354
1.0 vacant Groundswoker (Kelley Park PCN #3340)	\$55,653
1.0 filled Groundswoker (Guadalupe River Park PCN #3341)	\$63,830
1.0 vacant Maintenance Assistant (Guadalupe River Park PCN #7020)	\$50,052
1.0 filled Sr. Maint. Worker (Lake Cunningham Park PCN #3242)	\$82,656

Regional Parks Total                      \$317,545

Impacts (Regional Park Maintenance)

Loss of these 5.0 positions will result in longer response time for litter pick-up and garbage removal, edging, and aeration. Pruning would be performed on an as-needed basis and there would be limited ability to perform special projects. All remaining maintenance staff would be re-distributed to address health and safety-related tasks.

GENERAL SERVICES - PARKS MAINTENANCE DIVISION

Parks Maintenance Alternate Reduction Proposal

1.0 vacant Gardener (Horticultural Services – PCN #6727)	\$67,341
transfer to Fund 513 for landscape maintenance services at WPCP	
*1.0 vacant Gardener (Parks District 1 – PCN #3243)	\$71,173
*1.0 vacant Gardener (Parks District 4 – PCN # 4571)	\$66,237
*1.0 vacant Gardener (Parks District 6 – PCN #4569)	\$62,138
Sub-total	\$266,889

Non-Personal Services

Structural Tree Trimming	\$56,000
Horticultural Supplies (fertilizer)	\$50,000
Reduction in water usage (8% usage reduction)	\$140,000
Sub-total	\$246,000

GSD Total                      \$512,889

Grand Total Reduction                      \$830,434

\*Not included in original reduction proposal.

Impacts (Neighborhood Park Maintenance)

The proposed reduction of 4.0 Gardener positions in neighborhood park maintenance, along with \$246,000 in associated non-personal/equipment funding would have an impact on service levels. Although park restrooms would be opened and cleaned everyday, some parks without restrooms may not be visited daily. Maintenance would also be reduced on creek trails and civic grounds. Water usage would be reduced to help regulate turf growth. All tasks, including health and safety related tasks, would be performed less frequently. Litter pickup and trash removal may not occur daily at some neighborhood parks. Turf renovation tasks, such as aeration, fertilization, and over-seeding would be reduced. Bare spots may appear in turf areas as a result of sports usage without the staff's ability to repair them immediately. Weed abatement would be performed only on a time available basis. Structural tree trimming (preventive maintenance) would be done only if capital funding were available. Emergency safety hazards, however, would continue to be removed. Due to the elimination of preventive work, an increase in the amount of dropped limbs and fallen trees, especially during storm conditions would be expected.